

What determines geographical representation on party lists? Lessons from the Belgian case

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Abstract

Based on a dataset of party candidates from 488 party lists for seven elections of the Belgian Lower House (1987-2010), this contribution analyzes the effects of district magnitude, gender representation and candidate selection methods on the level of geographical representation on party lists. The results show that higher district magnitude leads to more dominant large municipality candidates on realistic list positions. Decentralized and inclusive candidate selection methods, however, increase the number of municipalities on the list and, as a result, the overall inclusiveness of party lists. Finally, a higher number of candidate list slots guarantees the inclusion of geographic minority candidates, but also strengthens the dominance of large municipality candidates on realistic positions.

1. Introduction

The focus of this paper is on the geographical representativeness of party lists. It examines which party- and electoral system-related attributes explain the variation in that response variable. By doing so, this contribution seeks to improve our understanding of the geographical consequences of intraparty candidate selection.

Electoral systems are often evaluated on the basis of their ability to translate election results into legislatures that reflect the composition of society. In proportional systems, we expect vote shares to be accurately translated into seat shares. In addition, members of parliament should also be a representative sample of society, for instance in terms of gender, ethnicity, age and geography. This argument stems from the theory of descriptive representation, which posits that a political institution must mirror the image of society to be viewed as legitimate by all segments of society (Pitkin, 1967; Birch, 1993). While descriptive representation is not without its critics, it has been a popular approach in empirical studies on the representation of minority groups (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995; Phillips, 1995; Cotta and Best, 2000).

Of the personal traits mentioned in the previous paragraph, the geography of MPs and candidates is definitely one of the under-researched topics. By contrast, scholars have extensively studied the representation of women and ethnic minorities in parliaments (Htun, 2004; Norris, 2004). Moreover, it has been well-documented why parties in proportional systems are inclined to balance their ticket to include women and ethnic minority groups among their candidates (Matland, 1993; Salmond, 2006). With regard to the geographical background of MPs and candidates, we only know that the large majority of electoral systems work with electoral districts to ensure geographical representation in parliament. There has been, however, surprisingly little attention on how political parties deal with geographical representation or geographic ticket-balancing on their party lists.

Latner and McGann (2005) demonstrated that even electoral systems with a single national constituency produce geographically representative parliaments. While it was clear that political parties played an important role in the process, it has not been examined how those parties achieved that result. Some authors claim that their internal candidate selection methods recognize the importance of regionalism, and force the party selectorates to produce geographically representative party lists (Koole and Leijenaar, 1988; Hazan, 1997).

This paper attempts to shed more light on the determinants of geographical representation on party lists. The question I try to tackle, is the following: which electoral system-related and party-related variables influence this outcome at the district (i.e. party list) level? A dataset was built on the place of residence of candidates on 488 party lists for seven elections of the Belgian Lower House (1987-2010). Three measures of geographical representation at the party list level were constructed, and will be used as outcome variables in the empirical analysis. Concerning independent variables, multiple measures of district magnitude are included as electoral system-variables, and the level of inclusiveness and decentralization in the candidate selection process as party-related variables. Additionally, the level of gender representation on party lists was measured to examine whether it is a strong predictor of other forms of representation on the list.

Belgium is a case where geography is strongly embedded in the political culture: it is a federal system combining territorial and non-territorial substate levels, with separate party systems and strong regional identities. Therefore, it is an interesting case to analyze geographical consequences of candidate selection methods. In addition, recent electoral reforms have significantly increased district magnitude and the level of gender representation through the introduction of quota laws, creating variation in key independent variables mentioned in the literature.

2. A general theory of ticket-balancing

Ticket-balancing implies that parties present a balanced group of candidates in terms of their background characteristics. With regard to the geographical background of candidates, this means that party selectorates nominate candidates from various areas in the district, instead of a geographically more concentrated group. If this is indeed a primary concern for parties, the place of residence of aspirant-candidates becomes one of the candidate selection criteria.

However, the importance of balancing tickets depends on the electoral system type and district magnitude, defined as the number of seats per district (Matland, 2005). In majoritarian systems, where district magnitude usually equals one, parties do not even have the chance to balance their ticket. They nominate only one candidate, and pursue the strategy of selecting a lowest common denominator (Tremblay, 2012), i.e. that particular candidate with the broadest electoral appeal. This maximizes the odds of winning a majority of votes and consequently the seat. In proportional systems, on the other hand, district magnitude is considerably higher, and parties could win multiple seats in the district. In other words, party magnitude (defined

as the number of seats a party wins in the district) increases, which implies that parties are able to divide their winning slots or realistic list positions among candidates from various social groups.

Parties in proportional systems thus have the theoretical possibility to balance their ticket, but will also be inclined to actually do so for both electoral and organisational reasons (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988; Norris, 2004; Valdin, 2012). From an electoral perspective, the exclusion of any major social group could signal discrimination, which could result into an electoral penalty at the ballot box (Norris, 2006). The ticket-balancing strategy also makes sense from a party cohesion perspective: balancing the slate also avoids internal conflict between party factions (Norris, 1997).

The ticket-balancing process is often considered a crucial factor affecting women's presence in parliaments and on party lists (Matland and Studlar, 1996). But the exact nature of this process, and the actual number of women getting elected, depends on the configuration of three elements: ballot structure, district and party magnitude. First, ballot structure determines which part of the candidate lists should be balanced to guarantee the election of women candidates. In closed list systems, where the specific rank order of candidates on the list determines who gets elected, parties have to put women in one of the top positions on the list (Marsh, 2005). In open list proportional systems, only the voters decide who will get elected by casting preference votes for one or more candidates on the list. In this case, the specific position of women candidates on the list is less important (see however: Miller and Krosnick, 1988). Finally, in the more hybrid list PR systems where both the rank order and the number of preference votes come into play (e.g. flexible list systems), it is important to have female candidates in winning slots as well as a reasonable number of women on the list in its entirety.

Second, the higher the district magnitude, the higher the absolute number of list slots and thus the available space to present a balanced group of candidates (Carey and Shugart, 1995; see, however: Crisp et al., 2007). A long list of candidates allows parties to include all relevant social groups on the ballot. After all, while the majority of the existing literature deals with the effects of ticket-balancing on the representation of women, this mechanism also increases the representation of other groups, such as ethnic minorities (Lovenduski and Norris, 1993; Norris, 1997). The third and final element, party magnitude, determines whether these groups have a realistic chance of getting elected to parliament. If a party expects to win only one seat

in the district, the candidate selection process becomes a ‘winner takes all’ event, thereby making ticket-balancing purely cosmetic (Young, 1994).

While this discussion of the ticket-balancing process largely focused on gender representation, I argue that the same mechanisms work for geographical representation. Higher district and party magnitude increases the chances of seeing candidates from both urbanized and rural areas on the party list and elected to parliament. The latter category could then be regarded as the geographic minority group.

But even in the most ideal institutional setup, there is no absolute guarantee that parties will actually balance their ticket. In fact, some parties might still prefer to nominate a very homogenous group of candidates, without actually getting electorally punished or creating intraparty turmoil. If those parties’ electoral support is largely concentrated in one social group, it will be less inclined to balance the ticket. Ethnic parties, for example, will mainly draw candidates from their own ethnic minority group since they are not interested in drawing support from other social groups (Holmsten et al., 2010). Mainstream parties, on the contrary, draw support from various social groups and will be more inclined to balance their ticket.

Applying this argument to geographical representation means that parties with geographically concentrated support will be less likely to produce geographically balanced tickets. Parties with geographically dispersed support, however, will put some effort in selecting candidates from various areas. In the next section, I derive a number of independent variables from the literature, and discuss their expected effects on the level of geographical representation on party lists.

3. Independent variables and hypotheses

District magnitude has already been discussed as an important predictor for the level of representation in parliaments and on party lists. In general, district magnitude is positively correlated with both the number of list slots and party magnitude, which means that both list space and multiple winning slots are available to get candidates from various social groups elected to parliament. The literature states that minority groups will have higher levels of political representation in larger districts (Matland, 1993; Salmond, 2006).

In terms of geographical representation, this would imply that district magnitude has a positive effect on the representation of geographic minority groups. I argue that candidates from small municipalities perform the minority role. In general, party selectorates will be

more inclined to nominate candidates from the larger and middle-sized municipalities of the district: those candidates share their place of residence with a larger proportion of voters which makes them electorally more attractive, and they resort on more resourceful grassroots organizations than candidates from the smallest municipalities. But this latter group does stand a chance of getting nominated in the largest districts: as district magnitude (DM) increases, parties will be more willing to allocate (realistic) list positions to geographical minority groups. This leads to the first hypothesis of this paper:

An increase in DM leads to more proportional and inclusive representation of municipalities on party lists (H1).

As mentioned earlier, even in electoral systems with favorable conditions for balanced tickets, one might encounter parties with no interest in ticket-balancing efforts. But among parties that do have such an interest, however, there will still be considerable variation in terms of effort and success. One might argue that we could measure these party efforts by using one form of social group representation as a predictor of another form. Put differently, if a party scores higher in terms of the representation of women, one might expect they also perform better in terms of geographic minority group representation.

This argument stems from a strong claim in the literature that levels of representation in one form are a good indicator of the levels of representation in the other (Taagepera, 1994; Lijphart, 1999). This is based on the idea that the same factors contribute to higher levels of gender and ethnic representation, mainly the electoral system in place, candidate supply and cultural factors (Dahlerup, 2013; Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Reynolds, 2006). While these authors focus on parliamentary representation, this association might also hold true for party lists. Controlling for the electoral system type and district magnitude, the level of inclusiveness on party lists in terms of gender representation might be positively associated with inclusiveness in terms of geographical representation. In other words, if party selectorates invest in representational politics and find it important to reflect society on party lists, geographical representation will go hand in hand with the presence of female candidates:

The levels of gender and geographical representation on party lists are positively correlated (H2a).

There has not been a lot of convincing empirical evidence for this argument. Based on a dataset comprising 95 countries, Ruedin (2010) found no positive association between levels

of gender and ethnic group representation. However, the author did not find a negative correlation either, indicating that it is not the case that increasing levels of representation in one form might come at the cost of another. One could, however, make the argument that it does: strong fixation on the representation of one social group may impede the representation of others. The literature on intersectionality points to the tensions that may be involved in the representation of gender and minority groups (Dovi, 2002). Holmsten et al. (2010) find that particularly the parties appealing to a religious minority tend to elect fewer women. Similar results were found in the cases of Arab and ultra-Orthodox parties in the Israeli Knesset (Rahat and Malka, 2012). As a result, an alternative hypothesis is formulated:

The levels of gender and geographical representation on party lists are negatively correlated (H2b).

Another relevant covariate is the nature of the parties' candidate selection methods. The most useful analytical framework for comparative analysis of candidate selection methods has been developed by Hazan and Rahat (2001; 2006; 2010). Their model disentangles four dimensions of candidate selection, among which selectorate and decentralization are the most important. The selectorate, on the one hand, is the body that selects the candidates, and can be composed of only one person, or several people, up to the entire electorate of the nation. This dimension can be measured on a continuum from inclusive selectorates, where a very limited group of selectors take control, to exclusive selectorates, such as the party members or the electorate. Decentralization, on the other hand, measures the extent to which local selectorates can nominate party candidates.ⁱ In the most centralized methods, the national party level has complete control over the nomination process.

There has been some research attention to the effect of candidate selection methods on political representation (Hazan, 1999; Rahat et al., 2008; Hazan and Rahat, 2010). An interesting finding is that parties with highly inclusive candidate selection methods produce lists with lower levels of representation. Rahat et al. (2008) find that selection methods with membership ballots are less likely to produce candidate lists with women on safe positions. Highly exclusive methods, on the contrary, lead to highly representative sets of candidates.

The underlying reason is the difference in the fundamental nature of the task confronting selectors in membership ballots vis-à-vis exclusive party committees. In membership ballots, on the one hand, members are asked after their individual preferences about party candidates. Selectors in party committees, on the other hand, are more inclined to base their decision on

an evaluation of the collective good of the party. In other words, these party committees are asked to construct a list of candidates that they think has the best chance of 1) maximizing the electoral result, and 2) keeping the intraparty turmoil to a minimum. In addition, membership ballots will also lead to unbalanced candidate lists because the actions of such a vast selectorate are more difficult to coordinate than the actions of party committees with a limited number of selectors. Following this argument, I formulate the following hypothesis:

Exclusive candidate selection methods lead to more proportional and inclusive geographical representation on party lists (H3).

An exclusive, non-selected party agency will produce a list of candidates from various areas within the district. This limited group of selectors will keep in mind the collective good of the party, which will then lead to geographically balanced candidate lists. A selection process where members are involved, by contrast, will be more likely to produce unbalanced lists.

The link between territorial decentralization in candidate selection methods and the level of geographical representation on candidate lists appears more straightforward. According to Hazan and Rahat (2010), this relationship is positive because “*if more power in the candidate selection process is given to the regional and/or the local selectorates, at the expense of the national party organization, the likely result will be more candidates chosen who represent the regional and local levels.*” In other words, it is argued that candidates selected by a decentralized, regional or local selectorate, will be more geographically representative than a list of candidates selected by a national party selectorate.

Decentralized candidate selection methods lead to more proportional and inclusive geographical representation on party lists (H4).

4. The case of Belgium

The Belgian electoral system is often characterized as a flexible list system, where voters are able to endorse a party list as a whole or to cast one or more preference votes for party candidates (Marsh 1985; Shugart 2005). In theory, both list order and the number of preference votes play an important role in the intraparty seat allocation. In practice, however, the threshold of preference votes to overcome the list order is reached very infrequently, which led scholars to characterize flexible list systems as closed-list systems in disguise (De Winter 2005, Crisp et al. 2013). In recent years, the Belgian system has experienced a number

of important electoral reforms that created variation in the key independent variables examined in this paper.

4.1 District magnitude in Belgian Lower House elections

First, district magnitude has increased substantially over the last two decades. As part of the fourth Belgian state reform in 1993, the number of electoral districts decreased from 30 to 20. This was a consequence of the decision to reduce the number of seats in the lower House from 212 to 150. As a result, average district magnitude increased from 5 to 7.5. As part of an electoral reform in 2002, the number of districts decreased a second time from 20 to 11. More specifically, the sub-province districts were merged to provincial electoral districts.ⁱⁱ The number of electoral districts decreased to 11 constituencies, with an average size of 13.6. Table 1 presents a number of descriptive statistics on the evolution of district magnitude for the election of the Belgian lower House.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Belgian electoral districts and lists for the election of the Lower House

	Number of districts	Number of seats	Average DM	Min. DM	Max. DM	Average list length	Min. List length	Max. list length
1990-1991	30	212	5	2	18	12.2	6	39
1995-1999	20	150	7.5	2	22	13.3	6	28
2003-2010	11	150	13.6	4	24	22.3	10	37

It is important to mention that the introduction of larger districts was accompanied by longer party lists. To some extent, this gave parties additional space to keep nominating candidates from both large and small municipalities. However, this should not be exaggerated: in both reforms the increase in the average list length was lower than the increase in the average district magnitude. In 1992, the average district magnitude increased by a ratio of 1.5 (7.5/5) and the average list length by a ratio of 1.1 (13.3/12.2). As a result, the net effect would still be a decrease in the number of candidates per seat. Figure 1 visualizes these reforms. While the majority of Belgian provinces were divided in relatively small districts before 1995, they have now become fairly large districts.

Figure 1: The electoral districts for the election of the Belgian Lower House before 1995 (left), in 1995 and 1999 (middle), and in 2003, 2007 and 2010 (right).



Some of the Belgian parties feared that the increase in district magnitude would make local ties completely irrelevant (Pilet, 2007). As elections would be organized on a higher scale, candidates from the largest cities would dominate election campaigns, making candidates from smaller municipalities invisible during election time. Moreover, these parties believed that the increase in district magnitude would actually lead to a centralization of intraparty decision-making procedures. The argument was based on the fact that candidate selection is often organized at the district level (Valen, 1988; Hix, 2004; Hazan and Rahat, 2010). This finding led some authors to assume that centralization tendencies in electoral systems would be followed by pressures for centralization in candidate selection processes (Czudnowski, 1975; Epstein, 1980). However, it has never been demonstrated that the increase of district magnitude has a linear effect on the centralization level in candidate selection methods (Lundell, 2004; Hazan and Voerman, 2006; Shomer, 2012).

4.2 Gender representation in Belgium

A second relevant electoral reform in Belgium was the introduction of candidate gender quotas. The first Belgian quota law was introduced in 1994 and first applied in the 1999 elections. It stated that no more than two thirds of the candidates on party lists could be of the same sex. In 2002, this law was adapted in the sense that party lists should from then on include an equal number of male and female candidates. In addition, at least one of the top three positions on the party list should be reserved for women. Right before the election of 2007, this requirement was again adapted to at least one woman in the two top positions.

The focus on list positions in the Belgian quota law can be explained by the importance of list order in the Belgian electoral system. Voters can either cast a vote at the top of the list, or a preference vote for one or more candidates on the same list. If candidates receive a specified

number of preference votes, they automatically get elected. Otherwise, the list votes are assigned to the highest ranked candidates until they reach the specified amount of votes needed for election. While the importance of list order has diminished over time (Wauters and Weekers, 2008), high ranks on the party list remain very important.

After the introduction of candidate gender quotas, all Belgian parties were legally bounded to nominate a sufficient number of female candidates on their party lists, and afterwards even in the winning slots. This substantially increased both the number of female candidates on realistic list positions and the number of female MPs in the Lower House (from 7.7% in 1987 to 38.5% in 2010). However, the proportion of female MPs has stagnated recently, and Belgian parties still vary considerably in their gender representation efforts on realistic list positions (Maddens et al., 2014).

4.3 Candidate selection methods of Belgian parties

In the majority of representative democracies, political parties use comparable candidate selection methods most of the time (Scarrow et al., 2002). According to Hazan and Voerman (2006), this lack of intra-country variation can be explained by shared norms within every political system that restrict the legitimate selection methods, and the imitation behaviour of parties towards one another. Belgian parties have also been copying each other's methods to some extent, but there still has been some considerable variation in both the level of inclusiveness and centralization of their procedures. A possible explanation for Belgium being a deviating case is its peculiar situation with separate regional party systems for the Flemish and Walloon regions of the country. As a result, parties from different regions have not been in competition with each other for over 40 years, and each region developed its own party system with – at least partly – different political and party cultures.

Various Belgian parties have employed highly inclusive selection methods over the last decades, allowing their members to participate in the process. The Flemish and Walloon Christian-Democrats, for example, have frequently been using a system of member polls: party members had the possibility to ratify or reject a model list drafted earlier by more exclusive party agencies (De Winter, 1988). Furthermore, the Flemish liberals introduced a highly inclusive system of primaries in the 1990s, which gave the opportunity to registered voters to nominate candidates for parliamentary elections (Verleden, 2013).

Other parties used methods working with party delegates. Since they are appointed by the members, these delegates can be seen as an indirect inclusion of party members in the selection process. The Flemish Socialists, for example, applied selection methods where the lists were ratified by an assembly of member delegates. But also the Flemish Christian-Democrats used these assemblies for the first three elections included in the analysis (Deschouwer, 1993).

Finally, there are also examples of highly exclusive selection methods, where no members of member delegates are involved in any way. On the contrary, these selection processes are completely dominated by non-selected party agencies. The Walloon liberal party MR is a good example of this category: only the presidents of the various party components were entitled to appoint the most important candidates on the party lists, and in a final step approve the entire candidate lists (Vandeleene et al., 2013).

But also in terms of centralization, there was considerable variation among Belgian parties between 1987 and 2010. The Flemish liberal party, for example, has a strong tradition of keeping the role of the national party level very limited. One or two party agencies at the district level dominated their selection process during the entire period under investigation. In other cases, candidate lists are the result of an interaction between party agencies at the district and national party level. A typical example are the selection methods applied by the Flemish Christian-Democrats: after a party agency at the district level took the initiative of drafting a first list proposal, a national party agency could either modify or ratify this list, before it was presented to the members through a poll.

Centralization was highest where the national party level had veto right in the final step of the selection process. In 2003 and 2007, the Walloon Christian-Democrats organized a candidate selection procedure where a national party committee with a limited number of members could approve the model list drafted by the district organization, or simply overrule the decisions made at the district level and draft a completely different proposal.

5. Data, measurements and method

I constructed a dataset on the place of residence of Belgian party candidates for all the elections of the Lower House since 1987.ⁱⁱⁱ These data on candidates from 488 party lists was used to calculate the level of geographical representation on the lists. The dataset contains information on candidates from eight Belgian parties: the Christian-democrats, liberals,

socialists and green parties of the Walloon and Flemish regions of Belgium. The criterion for selecting these parties was their level of institutionalization and whether they have been represented continually in parliament.^{iv} Furthermore, these parties submitted party lists in all districts during these elections, which indicates that they are parties with consolidated structures and high organizational complexity (Huntington, 1968).^v

5.1 Dependent variables: three indexes of geographical representation

One of the key issues to deal with is of course how to measure the level of geographical representation on party lists. In fact, there are various conceptions of this outcome variable. First, a party list could be considered geographically representative when it includes candidates from the highest possible number of municipalities. The more municipalities are covered, the higher the proportion of voters in the district that is able to find candidates from the same municipality on the list. I measure this interpretation of geographical representation by means of municipality-index Mi :

$$Mi = \frac{N_r}{N_t}$$

where N_r is the number of municipalities represented on the party list, and N_t is the total number of municipalities in the district. Every municipality in the district gets a score of 1 or 0, depending on the presence of at least one candidate from that municipality on the list. Subsequently, I aggregate the number of municipalities in the district with a score of 1, and divide this by the total number of municipalities in the district. Put differently, this index calculates the proportion of municipalities represented on the party lists. The higher the score, the higher the territorial coverage of the district in terms of party candidates. The higher the index score, the better a party scores on the municipality strategy-index.

Second, a party list could also be considered geographically representative when its distribution of candidates over municipalities is in proportion to these municipalities' population size. If a municipality accounts for over 50% of the entire population in a district, it should not come as a surprise that party selectorates will be inclined to nominate more than one candidate from there. Indeed, it could be perceived as geographically representative if the party selectorate would assign 50% of its list slots to candidates from this particular municipality. This second conception of geographical representation focuses on the proportional representation of the largest municipality in the district, and will be measured by population-index P_i :

$$P_i = |X_e - X_p|$$

Where X_e is the expected number of candidates from the largest city in the electoral district, based on its relative population size. X_p is the actual number of candidates from the largest municipality in the district. A perfect proportional representation of the largest municipality would imply a score of 0, a higher score points to an over- or underrepresentation.

These two measurements of geographical representation do not take into account list positions. Rank order remains an important determinant of the candidate's odds of getting elected in the Belgian flexible list system. A difference might exist between the level of geographical representation on the party list in its entirety on the one hand, and the realistic places on the other. As a result, a third index focuses on the realistic list positions. More specifically, it measures the proportion of candidates of the largest municipality on the realistic list positions:

$$R_i = \frac{R_{lm}}{R_n}$$

Where R_{lm} is the number of candidates of the largest municipality on a realistic place, and R_n is the total number of realistic places on the party list. Of course, determining realistic list places is not always a straightforward endeavour. According to Hazan and Rahat (2010), whether or not list positions can be considered as realistic depends on the electoral system and party strength in the district. In closed list systems, it would suffice to measure the amount of seats the party expects to win in the district. If a party expects to win three seats, then the first three positions on the list should be considered realistic. In flexible list systems such as the Belgian case, this exercise is more complicated.

In practice, Belgian party selectorates distinguish between realistic and non-realistic positions on the list, using previous election results as benchmarks (Put and Maddens, 2013). For example, if a party won three seats in a district during the previous election, the first four positions could be considered realistic: the candidate on the fourth positions stands a real chance of being elected on the condition that his or her number of preference votes is high enough and/or the party realizes a significant upward swing in the district. In addition, the Belgian case has known many examples of the candidate at the bottom of the list managing to get elected instead of a higher ranked candidate (Wauters et al., 2004). This is so because parties often choose popular politicians for this final position. For these reasons, the 'list pusher' will also be considered a realistic position in the analysis. Finally, a particularity of

the Belgian system is that voters are presented with a list of effective as well as substitute candidates. These substitutes for the elected MPs are also rank ordered on the basis of their preference votes, after the distribution of list votes. If an MP becomes member of government, resigns or dies, he or she will be replaced by the first substitute. Therefore the first substitute is also included in the category of realistic list positions.

These three indexes all have in common that they focus on the municipality level as the relevant geographical unit, and this for two substantial reasons. First, the municipality level is the lowest organizational unit within Belgian political parties and could still be seen as building stones of their party organizations (Deschouwer and Rihoux, 2008). They perform the crucial task of recruiting talented aspirant-candidates. The other subnational levels, on the contrary, are more important in terms of communication and linkage between the national and municipal level. Second, politicians' local ties are usually defined in terms of previous political experience at the municipal level (Tavits, 2009; Tavits, 2010; Put and Maddens, forthcoming).

5.2 Independent variables

District magnitude (DM) is measured by the number of seats per district. While this operationalization is common practice in the majority of studies using DM as independent variable, I will also control for the number of list positions available per municipality in the district. This ratio summarizes the scarcity of list places and level of competition that exists among the various municipalities in the district.

The level of gender representation on party lists is measured by the proportion of female candidates on realistic list positions. As a result of the introduction of quota laws, this proportion will generally increase over the seven Lower House elections under investigation. However, by using this measure, I control for substantial differences between parties within elections. For example, while parties were not legally required to nominate 50% of female candidates before 2003, the Flemish green party already reached this threshold in 1995 (Maddens et al., 2014).

To estimate the effect of intraparty candidate selection methods, I work with selection indexes measuring the dimensions of inclusiveness and decentralization on an ordinal scale. While Shomer (2009, 2012) introduced an integrated 6-point scale, I use two separate scales to test the distinct effects of inclusiveness and decentralization on the response variables.

Inclusiveness index

1 2 3

- 1: The selection process is dominated by one or several non-selected party agencies
- 2: Party member delegates participate in the selection process
- 3: Members participate in the selection process

The level of inclusiveness of Belgian candidate selection methods is measured on a 3-point scale. The highest level on this scale are selection methods where members are directly involved, for example by ratifying the model lists that have been drafted by one of the party agencies. The middle category on this scale are the selection methods where party members appoint delegates. The most exclusive category are procedures where members or delegates are not involved in any way, but one or more non-selected party agencies dominate the selection process.

Decentralization index

1 2 3

- 1: The national party level is dominant in the final phase of the selection process and/or has veto power
- 2: Selection process is interaction/cooperation between national and constituency level
- 3: Selection process takes place at the constituency level, national level not involved

I constructed a similar 3-point scale for measuring the level of decentralization, the second candidate selection dimension included in this study. The highest score on the scale is for the selection methods where the constituency organization has full autonomy in drafting the lists. If, however, the selection process takes the form of an interaction between the national and district level, the observation fits the second category on the index. The most centralized procedure is when the national party level controls the final step of the selection process and/or has the chance to overrule any previous decisions taken at a lower party level.

Finally, the number of realistic list places will also be added as a control variable to the three multivariate analyses. This will be measured in relative terms, i.e. the proportion of list places that can be considered realistic on the party list.

5.3 Method

The second dependent variable (P_i) measures the degree of proportionality in the representation of the largest municipality in the district, and can be considered a continuous dependent variable. To test the effect of the earlier mentioned independent variables on P_i , I use multiple OLS regression analysis.

The first and third dependent variable (M_i and R_i), however, are proportions: M_i measures the proportion of municipalities that are represented on the candidate list, and R_i measures the proportion of realistic candidates that lives in the largest municipality of the district. If the dependent variable is a proportion, both the assumptions of continuous scores and normality are violated. The classical solution to this problem is to perform a logit transformation to achieve normality, followed by multiple OLS regression. The following transformation is applied:^{vi}

$$\text{Logit}(R_i) = \ln\left(\frac{R_i}{1 - R_i}\right)$$

6. Multivariate analyses

In this section, I discuss the results of three OLS regression analyses with P_i , M_i and R_i as dependent variables.^{vii} Table 2 presents the OLS regression coefficients of these three models. Model 1 deals with P_i , the degree of proportionality in the representation of the largest municipality in the district. The results show that, first of all, district magnitude has a positive impact on this response variable. In larger districts, it appears more difficult to realize a proportional representation of the largest municipality than in smaller districts. In other words, an increase in DM seems to lead to a less proportional representation of the most sizeable city of the electoral district.

Gender representation, in terms of the number of women on realistic list positions, and the level of decentralization in the candidate selection method do not make a difference in the party list score on this index. With regard to the inclusiveness of the selectorate, however, there is only one category on the scale which has a negative impact on P_i : selection processes with member delegates lead to a more proportional representation of large municipalities.

Table 2. Determinants of geographical representation on party lists: OLS regression models

Variable	Model 1 Pi	Model 2 Mi	Model 3 Ri
Constant	-0.21 (0.24)	-1.94 *** (0.03)	-3.60*** (0.32)
District magnitude	0.08*** (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)	0.05*** (0.01)
Gender representation	-0.22 (0.22)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.37 (0.23)
Decentralization (ref.= <i>district level</i>)			
<i>Interaction national/district level</i>	0.16 (0.11)	-0.03 * (0.01)	-0.07 (0.15)
<i>National level veto/dominance</i>	0.11 (0.14)	-0.06 ** (0.02)	-0.17 (0.19)
Inclusiveness (ref.= <i>non-party agencies</i>)			
<i>Member delegates</i>	-0.43*** (0.12)	0.05 ** (0.02)	0.41* (0.16)
<i>Members</i>	-0.08 (0.14)	0.05 ** (0.02)	0.18 (0.19)
Proportion realistic list positions	0.35 (0.49)	0.11 (0.07)	-0.70 (0.67)
Average number of list positions per municipality	1.24*** (0.18)	0.67 *** (0.02)	1.31*** (0.24)
Adjusted R ²	.21	.67	.11

Notes: OLS estimates are shown. Standard errors between brackets. *: $p < 0,05$; **: $p < 0,01$; ***: $p < 0,001$

The average number of list places per municipality strongly increases the value of P_i . This indicates that, the more space available on party lists, the more parties will be able to present a list where the largest municipality is proportionally represented. This is also the case for the second and third response variable: more candidate list slots generally increases the proportionality and inclusiveness of party lists, which is not a surprising finding.

The results for response variable M_i , which measures the proportion of municipalities represented on party lists, are completely different (Model 2). This model explains as much as 67% of the variation in M_i . Both candidate selection dimensions appear strong predictors. Concerning decentralization, the data show that the more decentralized the selection process, the higher the proportion of represented municipalities on the party list. For candidate lists where the national party level dominates the selection process, M_i is significantly lower than on party lists where the district level is (partially) involved. This confirms the expectations formulated in hypothesis H4.

But also the inclusiveness of the selectorate appears to have a significant impact on Mi . More specifically, more inclusive selection methods lead to inclusive geographic representation on party lists: there are more municipalities represented on the list if members and delegates were involved in the candidate selection process. This finding is at odds with hypothesis H3 that exclusive selection methods draft more inclusive party lists (H3).

The third and final dependent variable Ri focuses on realistic list positions, and measures the proportion of these positions assigned to candidates living in the largest municipality of the district. The results suggest that district magnitude has a significantly positive effect on Ri , which was also the case in Model 1 (See Table 2). In other words, the largest cities are the most dominant on realistic positions in the largest electoral districts. In addition, the candidate selection processes with member delegates are the only category making a significant impact ($P < 0.05$): when member delegates are involved, the proportion of realistic places assigned to large cities is significantly higher than in other selection methods.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to provide more insight into the geographical consequences of intraparty candidate selection processes. Based on the relevant literature, I selected a number of independent variables which were expected to have an impact on geographical representation, measured in three different ways.

Some of the results were not particularly surprising. For example, the fact that higher numbers of list positions per municipality increases both the proportionality and inclusive nature of party lists, is self-evident. The more places on the list, the more the parties can take into account important balances for organizational and electoral purposes. Additionally, the finding that more decentralized candidate selection processes lead to more inclusive candidate lists in terms of municipalities covered on the list, is in line with hypothesis H4. Decentralization does not, however, lead to more proportional party lists or an increase of large municipality candidates on realistic list positions.

A more peculiar finding, however, is the effect of the inclusiveness of the selectorate (hypothesis H3). The more popular claim in the literature that exclusive party selectorates are the best choice for levels of representation (Rahat et al., 2008), is not confirmed by the data on the Belgian case. Instead, the involvement of members or member delegates increases the representation of geographic minorities on party lists. In sum, it appears that highly

decentralized and inclusive candidate selection methods are the most advantageous choice for candidates from small municipalities.

I also found that the level of geographical representation, whichever way it is operationalized, does not correlate with the level of gender representation on party lists. This implies that the data do not support the claim that the level of one form of representation is a good indicator of levels of representation in the other (hypothesis H2a). Nor does the data confirm the alternative hypothesis (H2b) that one form of representation goes at the expense of the other. As a consequence, the introduction of gender quota did not bring about a substantial decrease in other forms of representation.

Finally, district magnitude improves proportionality in the number of largest municipality candidates, and at the same time increases the number of those candidates on realistic positions. These findings suggest that an electoral district reform, which results in higher district magnitude, leads to more proportional geographical representation on party lists, but not necessarily more inclusive geographical representation. The latter strongly depends on the number of list positions per municipality. In other words, if a district reform takes place, policy makers should accompany the reform by substantially extending the number of list positions. Otherwise, geographic minority groups will be left behind during the nomination process.

While Belgium is of course a case with notoriously complex territorial and electoral dynamics, I believe that the results of these analyses can, to a certain extent, be generalized to comparable flexible list systems. More specifically, the variation in district magnitude and candidate selection methods of Belgian parties has been quite substantial over the last 25 years. This makes Belgium the ideal empirical testing ground for some of the hypotheses concerning the effects of electoral system attributes on party list representation. However, it is generally accepted in the specialized literature that candidate selection dynamics and the effects of district magnitude on party- and candidate behavior strongly differ according to electoral system type. This creates the need for a more comparative approach in future research, where both closed and open list systems are added to the analysis as well.

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NOTES

ⁱ While Hazan and Rahat (2001) discuss both territorial and functional decentralization, I only focus on territorial decentralization in this paper.

ⁱⁱ The only exception was the bilingual electoral district of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, for which the federal government failed to work out an acceptable solution for the involved language groups and the constitutional court.

ⁱⁱⁱ Candidates for the Lower House do not have to live in the electoral district where they will be running for election. In fact, if they are registered in any Belgian municipality on election day at the latest, the party selectorate can use them in any district they want.

^{iv} The only exception are the Flemish greens, who have been out of the Federal Parliament for one legislative term (2003-2007).

^v While the radical right party Vlaams Blok/Belang does meet these criteria, they were left out of the analysis because there is no Walloon counterpart available.

^{vi} However, this solution is still problematic if some of the observations in the dependent variable equal 0 or 1. The logit transformation for these observations will yield undefined values, resulting in missing values and consequently a loss of information. To avoid this, I will slightly adjust the data to ensure that $0 < R_i$ (or M_i) < 1 , and every observation will be included in the multivariate analyses. The adjusted transformation then looks like this:

$$\text{logit}(R_i) = \ln\left(\frac{R_i + 0.01}{1 - R_i - 0.01}\right)$$

^{vii} The regression coefficients should be interpreted with some caution: since I used a logit transformation of R_i and M_i , the resulting coefficients should be interpreted on the logarithmic scale. Although it is possible to back-transform an estimated probability on the logit scale to the probability scale, it is not possible to back-transform a regression parameter estimate to the probability scale.